

From: ["Washburn, Ben" </O=EXCHANGELABS/OU=EXCHANGE ADMINISTRATIVE:GROUP \(FYDIBOHF23SPDLT\)/CN=RECIPIENTS/CN=FDA03CBA30C542059E0AF4208DAD96DA-WASHBURN,BEN>](mailto:Washburn.Ben@EXCHANGELABS/OU=EXCHANGE ADMINISTRATIVE:GROUP (FYDIBOHF23SPDLT)/CN=RECIPIENTS/CN=FDA03CBA30C542059E0AF4208DAD96DA-WASHBURN,BEN)
To:
CC:
Date: 8/5/2014 3:09:31 PM
Subject: OPA Daily Digest 8/5/14

OPA Daily Digest for 8/5/14

Congressional Inquiries:

Sen. Charles Grassley (Iowa) – Letter – 7/24/14: Abandoned school site contaminated with asbestos in Letts, Iowa. Due: 7/24/14. Contact: LaTonya Sanders, 7555 (open)

State Government Inquiries:

Sen. Gary Romine, Sen. Doug Libla, Sen. Gina Walsh, Rep. Paul Wieland, Rep. Paul Fitzwater, Rep. TJ McKenna – Letter – 7/25/14: Express concerns about characterization of many areas of Missouri as “contaminated.” Due: 8/7/14. Contact: Ben Washburn, 7364 (open)

Press Inquiries:

MissouriNet – Bob Priddy – 7/31/14: Questions about ADM enforcement case. Contact: Ben Washburn, 7364 (closed)

Greenwire – Tiffany Stecker – 8/1/14: Requesting interview with RA for profile piece about EPA’s relationship with agriculture community. Contact: Ben Washburn, 7364 (open)

Kansas Public Radio – Bryan Thomson - 8/1/14 – Questions about how to correctly calculate GHG emissions from power plants. Contact: Ben Washburn, 7364 (closed)

Environmental Stories:

St. Louis Post-Dispatch - Bridgeton Landfill odor settlement is approved- 8/5/14 - A \$6.8 million class action settlement for residents who live closest to the smoldering Bridgeton Landfill is fair, reasonable and adequate, a federal judge has ruled.http://www.stltoday.com/lifestyles/health-med-fit/health/bridgeton-landfill-odor-settlement-is-approved/article_817328d1-aa61-5248-a3ae-a89801adf843.html

KMOX Radio St. Louis - Washington Landfill Trash Can Stay, Pending Soil Test- 8/4/14 - A landfill in Washington, Mo., is overflowing, but the city might not have to move the excess trash, after all. City administrator Jim Briggs says after how bad the odor was in Bridgeton, he really doesn’t want to have to move it.
<http://stlouis.cbslocal.com/2014/08/04/washington-landfill-trash-can-stay-pending-soil-test/>

KMOX Radio St. Louis - Radioactive Tritium, Cobalt 60 Found in Monitoring Well Near Callaway Nuclear Reactor- 8/4/14 - Ameren Missouri claims there is no threat to drinking water in the area after it found radioactive Tritium and Cobalt 60 in a monitoring well near the Callaway nuclear reactor it owns and operates.<http://stlouis.cbslocal.com/2014/08/04/radioactive-tritium-cobalt-60-found-in-monitoring-well-near-nuclear-reactor/>

St. Louis Business Journal - Cleaning the Carter Carburetor site to transform a neighborhood - 8/5/14 - The Carter Carburetor plant Superfund site is being cleaned up to make way for development in the JeffVanderLou neighborhood. <http://www.bizjournals.com/stlouis/news/2014/08/05/cleaning-the-carter-carburetor-site-to-transform-a.html>

St. Louis Post-Dispatch - Ameren finds elevated levels of radioactive materials near Callaway plant- 8/4/14 - Ameren Missouri has reported elevated levels of radioactive materials at a new groundwater monitoring well on the campus of its Mid-Missouri nuclear power plant. http://www.stltoday.com/news/local/state-and-regional/ameren-finds-elevated-levels-of-radioactive-materials-near-callaway-plant/article_de69b7ea-86a7-54bb-a904-0058d8798f73.html

Des Moines Register - Study: Iowa lost 15 million tons of soil to erosion- 8/5/14 - Iowa farms surveyed by an environmental group have made progress during the last year stemming soil erosion, but many operations in the state remain susceptible to erosion that sends soil and chemicals flowing into streams, ditches and other waterways. <http://www.desmoinesregister.com/story/money/agriculture/2014/08/05/environmental-working-group-says-iowa-lost-million-tons-soil-erosion/13609603/>

St. Louis Post-Dispatch - Missouri universities get \$20 million for climate research - 8/5/14 - A number of Missouri universities will share a \$20 million grant from the National Science Foundation to fund a five-year study on the variability of climate and its potential statewide agricultural, ecological and social impacts. http://www.stltoday.com/news/local/education/missouri-universities-get-million-for-climate-research/article_031e0169-74ac-5463-ac53-08f6652037c1.html

Radio Iowa - Branstad still on the fence over proposed pipeline- 8/4/14 - Governor Terry Branstad says he remains undecided whether to support or oppose a proposed pipeline that would carry crude oil through Iowa. Branstad says a top concern is the impact it might have on farmland. "The land here is very valuable and we need to make sure the productivity of the land is protected," Branstad told reporters today. <http://www.radioiowa.com/2014/08/04/branstad-still-on-the-fence-over-proposed-pipeline/>

Radio Nebraska - Nebraska rural affairs advocate speaks to EPA on climate change - 8/5/14 - The executive director of the Lyons-based Center for Rural Affairs testified about climate change at the federal Environmental Protection Agency hearing in Denver, part of a series of hearings being held across the country. <http://nebraskaradionetwork.com/2014/08/05/nebraska-rural-affairs-advocate-speaks-to-epa-on-climate-change/>

Environmental Working Group - One Year Later: Iowa's Battered Soil and Streams Still Unprotected - 8/5/14 - A new survey of Iowa farmland finds that "ephemeral gullies" are still ravaging many crop fields despite a few welcome signs of improvement compared to a year ago. Unprotected fields were once again battered by spring storms this year. <http://www.ewg.org/release/one-year-later-iowa-s-battered-soil-and-streams-still-unprotected>

Brownfield Ag News - Analyzing fields from a low altitude - 8/4/14 - Following a demonstration flight at the Precision Aerial Ag Show last month in Decatur, Illinois, Matt Barnard, a central Illinois farmer and the owner of Crop Copters, a company that markets unmanned aerial vehicles, talked to us about what's possible now and what are future possibilities for unmanned aerial vehicles. <http://brownfieldagnews.com/2014/08/04/analyzing-fields-from-a-low-altitude/>

Brownfield Ag News - Agricultural drainage technology - 8/5/14 - With advancements in agricultural drainage management technology farmers and landowners now have options that not only help the environment, but also provide economic benefits. <http://brownfieldagnews.com/2014/08/05/agricultural-drainage-technology/>

Ames Tribune (Iowa) - Report: Improvements seen in farm erosion but more are needed - 8/4/14 - Precautions taken in recent years to reduce soil erosion on Iowa farmland have shown progress is being made, but more needs to be done as the state has lost more than 15 million tons of soil in cropland erosion this year, according to a report released today by the Environmental Working Group. - See more at: <http://amestrib.com/news/report-improvements-seen-farm-erosion-more-are-needed>

Newton Daily News (Iowa) - Iowans advised to seek legal advice before signing contracts for pipeline - 8/4/14 - Jasper County residents are encouraged to seek legal assistance or contact the Iowa Attorney General's Office prior to entering into any type of legal agreement with an out of state company for a proposed pipeline that may go through Jasper County. <http://www.newtondailynews.com/2014/08/03/iowans-advised-to-seek-legal-advice-before-signing-contracts-for-pipeline/aftmdqu/>

Waterloo-Cedar Falls Courier (Iowa) - The transmission of wind energy is vital for Iowa's future - 8/4/14 - Wind is as plentiful in Iowa as corn and soybeans. Unfortunately, while the latter commodities have easy access to roads, rail and rivers to move them, once the wind is converted to energy it does not. Because of this, it is crucial for us to invest in

the future of Iowa by installing transmission lines that allow wind energy to be sold locally and nationally. http://wcfcourier.com/news/opinion/guest_column/the-transmission-of-wind-energy-is-vital-for-iowa-s/article_2a12808b-942a-502c-b094-664bdba0ad07.html

GlobalWarming.org - Can EPA Cooperate with Anyone (Except for Green Special Interests)? - 8/4/14 - Two events last Wednesday morning demonstrate well the EPA's dichotomous approach to collaboration: If you're an environmental special interest that helped Obama get elected, EPA welcomes you with open arms; if you're anybody else, EPA will spurn you. <http://www.globalwarming.org/2014/08/04/can-epa-cooperate-with-anyone-except-for-green-special-interests/>

Engineering News-Record - EPA Deputy Chief Bob Perciasepe Departs Agency To Lead Climate-Change Think Tank - 8/4/14 - Robert Perciasepe, deputy administrator of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency since 2009, will start on Aug. 11 as president of The Center for Climate and Energy Solutions, a Washington, D.C., climate-change and energy policy think tank. <http://enr.construction.com/people/promotions/2014/0804-epa-deputy-chief-bob-perciasepe-departs-for-climate-change-think-tank-presidents-job.asp>

Brookings (blog) - The Clean Power Plan's Equity Problems - 8/4/14 - In his response to our July 16th Wonkblog article, former EPA Deputy Administrator and Senior Policy Counsel Bob Sussman argues that we fail to give the EPA the credit it is due for its Clean Power Plan. Sussman argues that the EPA's approach to limiting greenhouse gas emissions from existing power plants is far from arbitrary. <http://www.brookings.edu/blogs/planetpolicy/posts/2014/08/05-clean-power-plan-equity-problems-wallach-abdun-nabi>

Huffington Post - In Effort To Fight Pollution, Beijing Plans To Ban All Coal Use By 2020 - 8/5/14 - China's smog-plagued capital has announced plans to ban the use of coal by the end of 2020 as the country fights deadly levels of pollution, especially in major cities. http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2014/08/05/beijing-coal-ban_n_5650244.html

The Hill - Kerry pushes 'climate-smart agriculture' - 8/4/14 Secretary of State John Kerry urged the U.S. and Africa to engage in "climate-smart agriculture" to make fisheries and farms more resilient. <http://thehill.com/policy/energy-environment/214276-kerry-pushes-for-climate-smart-agriculture-with-africa>

The Guardian (U.K.) - World's top PR companies rule out working with climate deniers - 8/4/14 - Ten firms say they will not represent clients that deny man-made climate change or seek to block emission-reducing regulations. <http://www.theguardian.com/environment/2014/aug/04/worlds-top-pr-companies-rule-out-working-with-climate-deniers>

St. Louis Business Journal - KSDK parent Gannett to split into two companies - 8/5/14 - Gannett, following a string of similar moves from publishers across the country, will spin off its publishing business from its broadcasting and digital operations. http://www.bizjournals.com/stlouis/morning_call/2014/08/ksdk-parent-gannett-to-split-into-two-companies.html

Yale Environment 360 - As Small Hydropower Expands, So Does Caution on Its Impacts - 8/4/14 - Small hydropower projects have the potential to bring electricity to millions of people now living off the grid. But experts warn that planners must carefully consider the cumulative effects of constructing too many small dams in a single watershed. http://e360.yale.edu/feature/as_small_hydropower_expands_so_does_caution_on_its_impacts/2790/

Midwest Energy News - Why some utilities are warming up to microgrids - 8/5/14 - Utility executives, who generally have resisted the incursion of distributed energy such as solar and wind power into their systems, seem to be embracing the prospect of more microgrids coming online. <http://www.midwestenergynews.com/2014/08/05/why-some-utilities-are-warming-up-to-microgrids/>

Climate Central - Determining Methane Leaks Is Key to Climate Goals - 8/5/14 - If President Obama's Clean Power Plan is going to work, lots of things will have to fall into place. Perhaps the most important is the reduction in greenhouse gases that is expected from increased use of natural gas to generate electricity. <http://www.climatecentral.org/news/climate-goals-priority-is-methane-leaks-17854>

Environmental Leader - How Companies Profit from Sustainability - 8/5/14 - Anna Clark interviews FedEx sustainability leader Nathan Loffice about how companies profit from sustainability. <http://www.environmentalleader.com/2014/08/05/how-companies-profit-from-sustainability/>

Associated Press - EPA hosts Texas hearing on oil refinery rules - 8/5/14 - The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency is holding its second and final hearing on proposed new standards for oil refinery emissions as part of a 60-day public comment period. <http://www.kansascity.com/news/nation-world/article1022447.html>

Yale Environment 360 - Forests already Seeing Effects of Climate Change, European Researchers Say - 8/5/14 - Damage from wind, bark beetles, and wildfires has increased drastically in Europe's forests in recent years, and climate change is the driving factor, according to research published in Nature Climate Change.

http://e360.yale.edu/digest/forests_already_seeing_effects_of_climate_change_european_researchers_say/4213/

Greenwire - Funding for emissions reduction projects could get boost under proposed rule - 8/4/14 - The Federal Highway Administration is seeking public feedback on its proposed handling of a congressionally required change aimed at steering more money into projects to cut fine particulate air emissions.

<http://www.eenews.net/greenwire/stories/1060004023/>

Greenwire - Admin releases biogas road map for farmers - 8/4/14 - The Agriculture Department, Energy Department and U.S. EPA released guidelines to help farmers develop biogas systems, a move they say will generate renewable energy, cut greenhouse gas emissions and drive economic growth in rural areas.

<http://www.eenews.net/greenwire/stories/1060004024/>

Greenwire - Opponents of EPA's power plant rule launch another attack lawsuit - 8/4/14 - Coal-dependent states have launched another suit against U.S. EPA aimed at killing its proposed greenhouse gas rule for existing power plants, but environmentalists say the challenge is more likely to earn them press coverage than a legal result.

<http://www.eenews.net/greenwire/stories/1060004031/>

Greenwire - Appellate judges warn lower courts about showing states too much deference in cleanup settlements - 8/4/14 - Federal appellate judges ruled Friday that lower courts must carefully scrutinize the terms of proposed settlement agreements between states and potentially liable parties for Superfund cleanups.

<http://www.eenews.net/greenwire/stories/1060004021/>

BNA - EPA Will Regulate Some TCE Uses Unless Industries Take Voluntary Action, Official Says - 7/31/14 - The Environmental Protection Agency will regulate uses of trichloroethylene that pose health risks to workers or consumers unless companies voluntarily stop using the solvent or find ways to reduce exposures, according to a senior agency official. http://news.bna.com/deln/DELNWB/split_display.adp?fedfid=50888850&vname=dennotallissues&jd=a0f4b6b2j9&split=0

BNA - Ohio Transferral of Water Permit Authority For Feedlots Violated Law, Lawsuit Claims - 8/4/14 - Ohio violated the Clean Water Act when, in 2001, it transferred discharge permitting authority for concentrated animal feeding operations (CAFOs) from the state's Environmental Protection Agency to its Department of Agriculture without notifying federal regulators, a lawsuit filed Aug. 4 in federal district court said. http://news.bna.com/deln/DELNWB/split_display.adp?fedfid=50888855&vname=dennotallissues&jd=a0f4b6j9v4&split=0

BNA - EPA Says CAFO Reporting Rule Withdrawn For Being Duplicative, Probably Ineffective - 8/4/14 - The Environmental Protection Agency is defending its decision to withdraw its reporting rule for concentrated animal feeding operations, telling a federal court the rule would have been "largely duplicative and potentially ineffective."

http://news.bna.com/deln/DELNWB/split_display.adp?fedfid=50888853&vname=dennotallissues&jd=a0f4b6g3x8&split=0

BNA - Improvement in Electronics Management Noted in Federal Government, Officials Say - 8/4/14 - Federal agencies have made significant improvements in how they manage used electronics products across the government but have ample room for improvement, officials from four agencies said Aug. 4.

http://news.bna.com/deln/DELNWB/split_display.adp?fedfid=50888849&vname=dennotallissues&jd=a0f4b6a3r4&split=0

BNA - Broader Tax Credit Urged for Biogas Plants; Some Lawmakers Consider Non-Energy Uses - 8/4/14 - Farmers can harness gas from everything from cow manure to crushed grape skins and take a tax credit when they turn it into electricity. Sell the gas directly into pipelines, though, and tax credits evaporate. A few lawmakers in Congress are trying to change the U.S. tax code to allow tax credits for gas plants built to produce natural gas that isn't necessarily used for electricity.

http://news.bna.com/deln/DELNWB/split_display.adp?fedfid=50888863&vname=dennotallissues&jd=a0f4b7k2q5&split=0

BNA - Consumer Tests of New EPA Logo Options For Chemical Products to Begin Next Month - 8/4/14 - Detergents, floor-care products and other goods marked with a new logo to show they are made with chemicals meeting the Environmental Protection Agency's low toxicity and other criteria will begin appearing on store shelves by early 2015, a senior

EPA official said Aug. 4. http://news.bna.com/deln/DELNWB/split_display.adp?fedfid=50888852&vname=dennotallissues&jd=a0f4b6d9m1&split=0

Inside EPA - After Delays, EPA Sends Oil Spill Response Rule Revisions To OMB - 8/5/14 - EPA late last month sent to the White House for review its long-stalled revisions to regulations governing the authorization of oil spill response agents such as dispersants. <http://insideepa.com/Risk-Policy-Report/Risk-Policy-Report-08/05/2014/after-delays-epa-sends-oil-spill-response-rule-revisions-to-omb/menu-id-130.html>

Inside EPA - Faulting States, Advocates Seek Fugitive Dust Limit In EPA Coal Ash Rule - 8/5/14 - Environmentalists are renewing their past calls for EPA to at least retain its proposed fugitive dust emissions standard when the agency promulgates a final Resource Conservation and Recovery Act (RCRA) rule governing coal ash disposal later this year. <http://insideepa.com/Risk-Policy-Report/Risk-Policy-Report-08/05/2014/faulting-states-advocates-seek-fugitive-dust-limit-in-epa-coal-ash-rule/menu-id-130.html>

Inside EPA - SAB Calls For EPA To Improve Sustainability Focus In Environment Report - 8/5/14 - EPA's Science Advisory Board (SAB) is urging agency staff to improve the "indicators" of sustainability included in the latest draft Report on the Environment (RoE) -- a comprehensive assessment of the health of the environment -- and pushing EPA to revise the pending study to better reflect the agency's goal of promoting sustainability. <http://insideepa.com/Risk-Policy-Report/Risk-Policy-Report-08/05/2014/sab-calls-for-epa-to-improve-sustainability-focus-in-environment-report/menu-id-130.html>

Inside EPA - EPA Defends Waste Classification Rule As Reasonable Use Of Discretion - 8/4/14 - EPA is defending as a reasonable use of rulemaking discretion its rule for determining when material burned in combustion units is a "waste" subject to strict incinerator emission controls or a "fuel" subject to less-stringent boiler requirements. <http://insideepa.com/201408042478567/EPA-Daily-News/Daily-News/epa-defends-waste-classification-rule-as-reasonable-use-of-discretion/menu-id-95.html>

Inside EPA - Advocates' Suit Could Set Precedent On Stringency Of BART In Haze Plans - 8/4/14 - Environmentalists' lawsuit challenging EPA's approval of what they say are insufficiently strict best available retrofit technology (BART) emissions control requirements at 33 Pennsylvania power plants could ultimately set a legal precedent on the stringency of BART mandates in states' plans for reducing haze levels, advocates say. <http://cleanenergyreport.com/201408042478547/Clean-Energy-Report-Daily-News/News/advocates-suit-could-set-precedent-on-stringency-of-bart-in-haze-plans/menu-id-202.html>

Inside EPA - To Block ESPS Rulemaking, States Target EPA's Deadline Settlement Pact - 8/3/14 - A dozen states are asking a key appellate court to block EPA from developing its rule limiting greenhouse gases (GHGs) from existing power plants, charging in a novel suit that agency officials were not within their right to agree to the settlement driving the rule's development because it violates the Clean Air Act. <http://insideepa.com/201408032478510/EPA-Daily-News/Daily-News/to-block-esps-rulemaking-states-target-epas-deadline-settlement-pact/menu-id-95.html>

Inside EPA - Bucking Industry, Exelon Urges EPA To Strengthen Gas Standard In NSPS - 8/5/14 - Exelon Corp., one of the nation's largest utilities, is breaking from other players in the industry to urge EPA to tighten its proposed limit for new natural gas plants in its new source performance standard (NSPS) earlier this year. <http://insideepa.com/201408052478599/EPA-Daily-News/Daily-News/bucking-industry-exelon-urges-epa-to-strengthen-gas-standard-in-nsps/menu-id-95.html>

Inside EPA - EPA Preparing To Gather More Commercial Building Lead Paint Data - 8/5/14 - EPA is moving ahead with plans to gather extensive data on potential risks to the public from lead paint during renovation and maintenance of public and commercial buildings (P&CBs) -- despite industry arguments that such action is unnecessary. <http://insideepa.com/201408052478596/EPA-Daily-News/Daily-News/epa-preparing-to-gather-more-commercial-building-lead-paint-data/menu-id-95.html>

Press Releases:

Link to all R7 press releases: <http://go.usa.gov/Qx5>

None

Fact Sheets:

Link to all R7 fact sheets: <http://www.epa.gov/region7/factsheets>

None

Upcoming Administrator/RA Events:

* New additions noted with an asterisk

***8/5/14** – Meet with Jeff Rainford, St. Louis Mayor Francis Slay Chief of Staff, St. Louis, Mo. Contact Charlie Foley, 7710

***8/5/14** – Meet with Otis Williams, St. Louis Development Corporation, St. Louis, Mo. Contact Charlie Foley, 7710

8/6/14 - St. Louis Regional Chamber of Commerce Meeting (Clean Power Plan), St. Louis, Mo. Contact: David Bryan, 7433

8/11/14 – Black & Veatch Greenhouse Gas Strategies Forum (Clean Power Plan), Kansas City, Mo. Contact: David Bryan, 7433

8/13/14 – Iowa Association of Business & Industry (Clean Power Plan), Des Moines, Iowa. Contact: David Bryan, 7433

8/14/14 - Agricultural Outreach, Sedalia, Mo. Contact: Kris Lancaster, 7557

***9/3/14** – Office of Water Visit to Region 7, Regional Office. Contact: Karen Flournoy, 7782

9/10/14 - Kansas City Steel Redevelopment/Walmart Grand Opening, Kansas City, Kan. Contact: Ben Washburn, 7364

9/10/14 – U.S. Health & Human Services Senior Leadership Meeting (Clean Power Plan), Kansas City, Mo. Contact: Kris Lancaster, 7557

9/14-17/14 – Environmental Council of the States (ECOS) Fall Meeting, Santa Fe, N.M. Contact: Julia Cacho,

DRA:

8/20/14 – Tribal Consultation Training, Regional Office. Contact: Heather Hamilton, 7039

RA/Immediate Office

None

Other Events

AWMD

None

CNSL

None

ECO/EJ

None

ENSV

None

PLMG

None

RA/OPA

9/29-30/14 - Healthy Schools Outreach, Missouri School Plant Managers' Association Conference, Four Seasons, Lake of the Ozarks, Mo. Contact: Kathleen Fenton, 7874 and Harry Diesel, 7382

SUPR

None

WWPD

7/31/14 – Speech on Waters of the U.S. at the Environmental Conference at the Lake, Osage Beach, Mo. Contact: Steve Kovac, 7698

7/31/14 - Worker Protection Standard Stakeholder Meeting; Des Moines, Iowa. Contact: Katie Howard, 7861

***8/5-7/14** – Nebraska Department of Environmental Quality Watershed Workshop Presentation, Lincoln, Neb. Contact: Heather Duncan, 7640

***8/12-13/14** – Missouri Department of Natural Resources Underground Injection Control Program Meeting, Rolla, Mo. Contact: Kurt Hildebrandt, 7413

8/18-21/14 – Purdue Pesticide Program Certification and Training Workshop, Indianapolis, Ind. Contact: Douglas Jones, 7592

***8/19/14** – Missouri Safe Drinking Water Commission Meeting, Joplin, Mo. Contact: Neftali Hernandez-Santiago, 7036

8/20/14 – Water Quality Standards Triennial Review with Iowa Department of Natural Resources, Des Moines, Iowa. Contact: John Reyna, 7021

***8/26-28/14** – Kansas Water Environment Association/Kansas Section, American Water Works Association Joint Conference, Topeka, Kan. Contact: Wayne Dillard, 7885

***9/8-11/14** – National EPA Small Systems Drinking Water Technical Conference, Cincinnati, Ohio. Contact: Stan Calow, 7410

***9/9/14** – Iowa Department of Natural Resources Drinking Water Program Meeting, Des Moines, Iowa. Contact: Neftali Hernandez-Santiago, 7036

Study: Iowa lost 15 million tons of soil to erosion

By Christopher Doering

<http://www.desmoinesregister.com/story/money/agriculture/2014/08/05/environmental-working-group-says-iowa-lost-million-tons-soil-erosion/13609603/>

WASHINGTON – Iowa farms surveyed by an environmental group have made progress during the last year stemming soil erosion, but many operations in the state remain susceptible to erosion that sends soil and chemicals flowing into streams, ditches and other waterways.

The Environmental Working Group study released today said central Iowa “dodged an erosion bullet” this spring because southwestern and northeastern parts of the state were hit hardest by strong storms during April, May and June. An estimated 15 million tons of soil had been lost in Iowa through the end of June, the study found, with 30 percent of it coming from Pottawattamie, Adair, Clayton and Cass counties.

Runoff of Iowa’s nutrient-rich topsoil generally means lower yields for farmers and less income, as well as damage to Iowa lakes and streams. The soil is the foundation for agriculture, which depends on corn and soybean farmers, as well as agribusiness giants such as Deere & Co. and DuPont Pioneer, to pump millions of dollars into the state’s economy. Agriculture and related businesses provide about one-quarter of Iowa’s \$152.4 billion gross domestic product.

To lessen the rate of soil erosion, agriculture producers put in grass buffers, plant cover crops, reduce or end tillage and change their fertilizer applications, among other conservation projects. As part of those efforts, 25.6 million acres, including 1.5 million in Iowa, are enrolled in the government’s Conservation Reserve Program that pays landowners an annual rent to idle environmentally fragile land for 10 years or more.

Craig Cox, EWG’s senior vice president for agriculture and natural resources, said conservation practices have been shown to work, but there are not enough farmers volunteering to use them on their operations to have a meaningful impact. States, he said, should require that farmers use basic conservation practices.

“Iowa farm fields are really vulnerable to these heavy spring storms that seem to be the norm. They lose a lot of soil, a lot of mud and farm chemicals are delivered to ditches and streams,” Cox said. “It’s intolerable that we know how to solve these problems and we’re just not doing it.”

In late May, the EWG returned to 18 farms located in central Iowa that the group had visited following heavy spring rains in 2013 to see whether farmers had put in place new conservation practices. The environmental group found five of the farms had practices in place to prevent short-lasting gullies or soil erosion, while another five had soil conservation efforts in place last year that were being maintained in 2014.

The remaining eight fields showed no sign of efforts to enhance soil conservation, with two of them showing previously failed conservation practices that had yet to be fixed.

The EWG study is the latest to look at soil erosion. In May, Rick Cruse, an Iowa State University agronomy professor, said that wind and rainstorms that carry away topsoil from farmland in the state each year could potentially cut \$1 billion in yield from the state’s 88,000 farms.

A 2012 study from the Agriculture Department’s Natural Resources Conservation Service found farmers in the Upper Mississippi River Basin, which includes part of Iowa, have made “significant progress” in reducing sediment, nutrient, and pesticide losses from farm fields by adopting conservation practices, but it determined that opportunities existed for further reductions.

The report, which looked at the 63 million acres of cropland in the basin during 2003 to 2006, found 15 percent of cropped acres had a high level of need for additional conservation efforts. An additional 26 million acres had a moderate need for further conservation measures.

David Miller, director of research at the Iowa Farm Bureau Federation, said farmers have made substantial investments in cover crops while miles of stream buffers and terraces have been put in place to address soil erosion issues, he said.

"Maintaining and protecting Iowa's soils is something farmers across the state take seriously and farmers are taking appropriate steps to be good stewards of the land," Miller said. "A lot has been done. More can be done, and more is being done this year and more will be done in the coming years."

Study: Gulf "dead zone" in 2014 will be size of Connecticut

U.S. scientists said the "dead zone" of oxygen-depleted waters in the Gulf of Mexico in 2014 will be about average size, covering an area similar to Connecticut.

The estimate, developed by scientists including Nancy Rabalais at the Louisiana Universities Marine Consortium, said the dead zone, located off of Louisiana and Texas, is about 5,052 square miles as of Aug. 1. An unusual development of this year's dead zone is that it's divided into two sections rather than a continuous one.

The zone is caused by nutrient runoff, primarily from human activities such as wastewater and fertilizer used to grow crops. The runoff stimulates an oversupply of algae that consumes most of the life-giving oxygen supply in the water, driving away sea life.

The largest dead zone on record was 8,480 square miles in 2002. The average size during the past five years has been 5,500 square miles.

Focus on the dead zone comes as residents in Toledo, Ohio, were temporarily banned from drinking city tap water after it was found to have a higher-than-approved toxin known as microcystin. The toxin was likely produced by algae in Lake Erie.